

PAYING HOMAGE TO THE FOD GOD



By PR1 Thomas Leadingham

*“Get your hands out of your pockets
Eyes on the deck ...
No talking...
Let’s go!”*

Every morning around sunrise, Navy and Marine Corps aviation personnel walk the flight lines in a ritual almost as old as naval aviation: the FOD walkdown. This morning stroll seeks to collect worthy tributes; we then display the day’s offerings to the mighty FOD god. Every pilot and maintainer knows that if the FOD god is not given his offerings, an aircraft may not go flying, or worse, one could fall from the skies in a most ungraceful way.

We walk (slide in some cases) the good walk—in bright sunshine, snow, rain or monsoon, to find things that could be harmful to our aircraft. The hot sunny days of summer can be nice until the flight-line temperature breaks 110 degrees Fahrenheit. The cold days of winter are absolute zero fun, until a nice, light snow covers the flight line, resulting in an all-out snowball fight before we get back to the hangar. Hey,

snow is FOD, right?

Foreign lands hold their own charms. The Philippines can be sunny one minute and engulfed in a monsoon the next, with sideways rain so hard the monkeys would tumble down the flight line. Japan always has ash on the runways. In Korea, we find golf balls next to the revetments (everywhere but on the course). Bases in Turkey have empty shell casings everywhere.

In the few years I have been paying homage to the FOD god, I have found some wondrous objects: a wrist watch, ink pens, nuts, bolts, screws, washers, gold necklace, rattlesnake (live), soda can, dog tags, \$5 bill, cigarettes, rank insignia, an igloo cooler, a pizza box (empty), and (drum roll please) the “golden bolt,” which won me a day off.

All this FOD raises some questions. Ever wonder where all these offerings to the FOD god come from? Ever wonder what we don’t find? The next time you go to work on the flight line, stop and think about what you might leave as an offering to the FOD god—car keys, safety wire, screws, pens, candy wrappers, sunflower seeds, or worse yet, part of you. 🦋

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